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071711Z Oct 04

ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00	DS-00
	EAP-00	VC-00	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01	L-00
	VCE-00	AC-00	DCP-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIG-00	OMB-00
	PA-00	PM-00	GIWI-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	FMPC-00
	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	R-00	IIP-00	PMB-00
	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00	SAS-00	/001W	

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FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7059  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 001993

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/06/2014

TAGS: [GH](#) [PGOV](#)

SUBJECT: GHANA'S ELECTORAL COMMISSION CONFIDENT ABOUT  
ELECTIONS

Classified By: PolChief Scott Ticknor for reasons 1.5 (d and e).

[11.](#) (C) Summary: Electoral Commission (EC) Chairman Kwado Afari-Gyan and other EC members are confident that preparations are on track for free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections in Ghana. Afari-Gyan said the EC was open to party complaints, and that he did not perceive disproportionate media access by the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP), as some in the opposition allege. He hoped the published provisional voting register -- due out on October 12 -- would not generate many requests for changes, which could delay election preparations. The EC is under tight time pressure to complete the registration process and legalize the election date in Parliament. The EC welcomes foreign observers but is not actively seeking them. While Afari-Gyan's reassurances were convincing, the EC could do a better job at communicating with the media and the public. End summary.

[12.](#) (U) On October 6, Charge hosted a lunch for Ghana's Electoral Commission Chairman Dr. Kwado Afari-Gyan and five of the other six members of the Electoral Commission (EC). Charge noted that the Embassy was meeting with all the political parties and members of civil society, in addition to the EC, to discuss the upcoming elections.

Background

[13.](#) (SBU) Ghana's Electoral Commission (EC) was established under the 1992 constitution, with primary responsibility for conducting all elections in a free and fair manner. The EC has seven members, headed by a Chairman, and a staff of 1,300 people. EC members are nominated by the President (with the advice of the Council of State, a group of eminent private citizens) and they serve until retirement at age 60. Ghana's EC has earned a good reputation. Chairman Afari-Gyan is seen as impartial and firm, but has become somewhat of a recluse.

The Election "A Bit Tight"

[14.](#) (C) Afari-Gyan painted a confident picture of the EC and preparations for the upcoming election. He conceded that preparations were "a bit tight" on time because procedural disagreements between the EC and the government had caused a six month delay in the voter registration process. The EC completed the registration 'mop up' exercise, which gave registered voters more time to get their photos taken. Few people showed up for the mop-up, perhaps because many of the extra names were duplicates, the EC reps said. The register of 10.2 million names with photos will be published on October 12-17. The EC can not accept candidate nominations until the register is completed but it has tentatively set October 20 and 21 as nomination filing dates, according to the EC officials.

[15.](#) (C) Afari-Gyan is confident the police will act impartially on election day and that the parties will abide by a Code of Conduct not to deploy "macho men" (party thugs) to intimidate voters. He conceded that some materials ran short during the registration process because the EC did not know how many people would respond in any given area and because internal controls on voting material made it difficult for EC officials to shift resources. Election participation will be more predictable on voting day and the EC will deliver adequate materials to polling booths. Unlike in 2000, this year the EC had budgeted for a possible run-off

election. The EC invited participation by foreign observers, although it was not actively seeking their involvement.

#### Responding to Complaints

16. (C) Polchief noted some concerns we have heard about the accessibility of the EC to complaints from parties. Afari-Gyan said the EC met with all the parties once a month in the Inter-Party Committee (IPAC) and that he had a steady flow of party officials in his office raising issues. There was a formal complaint mechanism, and he met with the media when he saw the need, sometimes in seminars. He said he could not possibly respond to every informal issue or complaint raised in radio talk shows and other media, nor can he respond to every complaint which parties raise, as some were frivolous.

17. (C) PolChief noted opposition party complaints that the incumbent New Patriotic Party (NPP) is using the state media to get disproportionate coverage for its candidate, President John Kufuor. Afari-Gyan said this was primarily an issue for the Ghana Media Commission, although the EC would take note if these concerns were serious. At this point, he felt that parties were being given fair air time, although the media would stick to stories they deemed newsworthy. It was

inevitable the President would get more coverage as he moves around the country, and at least he was not wearing party colors at official functions, as happened in 2000. Afari-Gyan pointed out that under the constitution, the state media must give equal time to all candidates once the campaign has officially launched (after candidates have filed their nominations).

#### EC Concerns

18. (C) When asked about his worst nightmare, Afari-Gyan said too many demands for changes to the voter registration list would further delay election preparations. He grumbled that donors had not fulfilled promises to pay for 40 percent of the EC's election expenses. He worried about being bogged down in minor legal squabbles (he had just returned from addressing a group of judges, educating them about the electoral process and urging them not to grant frivolous election-related injunctions.) Afari-Gyan's biggest headache at the moment, however, was legalizing the election date. Under the constitution, the EC must submit the date as a Constitutional Instrument (CI) to Parliament, which has 21 days to ratify it. The EC submitted a CI to parliament on October 7. While the CI is seen as a mere formality, the EC is under time pressure since the current session of Parliament will only last for about one month.

#### Comment

19. (C) Afari-Gyan was forceful and confident. He saw no major problems in election preparations and offered credible responses to concerns about the registration process. He was surprisingly indifferent to a role for foreign observers. Afari-Gyan's style is low profile. If the EC has the election preparations under control -- as Chairman Afari-Gyan credibly conveyed to us -- it could do a better job of convincing civil society and the opposition, many of whom view the Commission as inaccessible, unresponsive, and inefficient.

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